Child Welfare

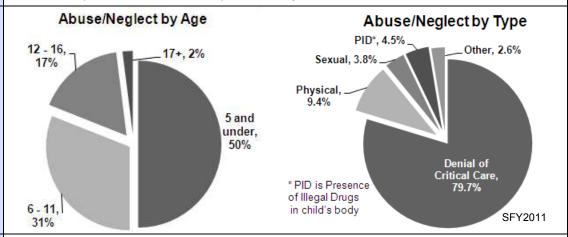
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Purpose

Child welfare services are directed at three outcomes – safety for children at risk, permanency, and child and family well-being.

Who



What

The department:

- Investigates reports of child abuse to determine if the child is safe and whether abuse has occurred. During calendar 2010, DHS completed 26,413 child abuse assessments. Two-thirds of assessments show no abuse or neglect; 25 percent are "founded" and perpetrators are placed on the child abuse registry, and 8 percent are "confirmed" in less-serious cases.
 - For details, see separate one-page "child welfare by the numbers." http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/docs/childwelfarebynumbers2010.pdf
- Provides services to maintain safety at home for children who have been abused or neglected. If safety at home is not possible, the department arranges temporary out-of-home placement, first seeking relatives to help. Other options include family foster care.
- Provides permanency services, including family reunification and adoption.
- Assists foster care youth aged 16 to 18 to prepare for adulthood, and provides extensive support for aged-out youth.

How are we doing?

Recent highlights:

- Creation (in 2010) of a single centralized intake unit to evaluate abuse complaints, helping to prevent regional variations in decision-making.
- Expanded use of family team meetings to engage families. Also expanded use of "parent partners" to provide guidance and support by peers.
- Consistently low rate of repeat maltreatment. But federal standards continue to rise and lowa (and all states) need improvement as measured in the Child and Family Service Review.

http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/docs/8.10_IA_CFSR_Exit_Conference_Presentation.pdf#search='cfsr'

- Regular public reporting of Iowa's performance compared to federal benchmarks. https://dhssecure.dhs.state.ia.us/digitaldashboard/
- Results-based child welfare service contracts that provide more flexible individualized services for children and families, and which provide incentives for results.
- Permanency for older youth. Surveys show "aged out" foster youth have needs met when they participate in DHS aftercare programs, including Preparation for Adult Living that provides stipends.